MARVEL

THE ULTIMATES

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Dear Dad...
"Dear god..."
You sure made a mess of things, didn't you?
"What a mess."

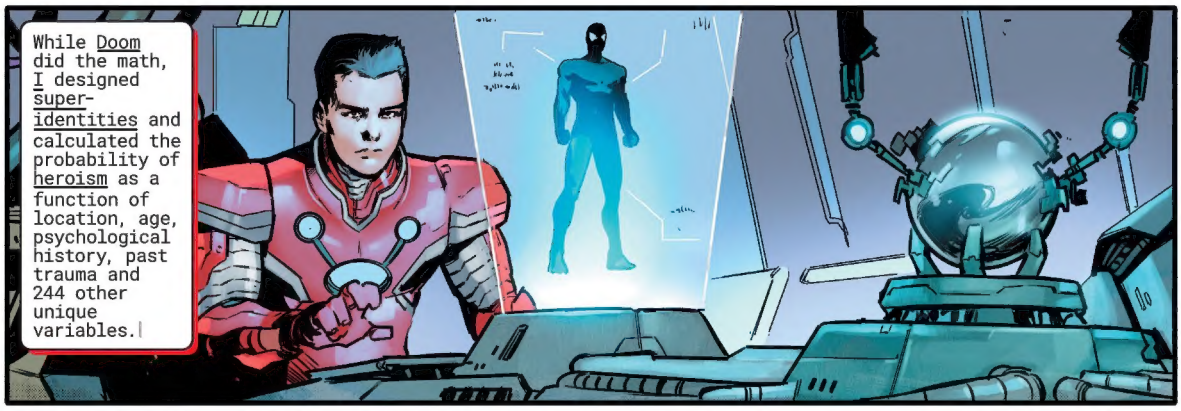
We can fix it.
Six months, Dad. Six months you've been gone to the world.
REMEMBERING THE LIVES LOST IN TH
TONY STARK IS PRESUMED DEAD
I was referring to *us*, Iron Lad. *We* are a mess.
Six months trapped with that...monster.
For you, it probably seems like a thousand years.
But for us, it is like yesterday.

I *know*-- it doesn't look good. To review: We've escaped six months into the *future*. Thousands died in the attack on Stark Tower meant for *us*.
The perpetrators of that attack--a conspiracy of the worst and most powerful people imaginable--have taken control of both the *planet* and the *narrative*.
The world thinks we're *violent terrorists*.
Also--our most powerful ally is gravely injured. Another is trapped in *ice*.
As I said: A *mess*.
But *we* have a *TIME MACHINE*.
And in eighteen months, the devil breaks out of Hell.
We can *fix* it.
In an off-the-books Stane/Stark corporate spy satellite, we worked it all out.

2 YEARS TO FIX THE WORLD
You mean *eighteen months.*
We've traveled six months into the future, Doom. It's *June.*
Not that complicated.
2 YEARS TO FIX THE WORLD
MAKER IMPRISONED / TEMPORAL DEFENSES DISABLED
1963
2024
"We have a time machine." You said it, but did you *understand* it? With the *Immortus Engine,* we can act simultaneously in the past, present *and* future.
You'll have to think in four dimensions if you want to *change the world,* Iron Lad.
Point taken. So why stop there? If we can go back six months, why not *60 years?* Why not fix *everything?*
MAKER IMPRISONED / TEMPORAL DEFENSES DISABLED
The Maker's work is not so easily *unmade.* Events *before* we disabled his temporal shields are out of reach--*for now.* So to speak.
There are high walls around the past. Six months is our current negative limit.
Okay... then we go back and stop the destruction of *Stark Tower.* That's within our range.
We failed to stop it *then.* How do you expect to stop it *now?*
Well...I have a few *ideas.*
Of course, I'd been thinking about how to change the world since my fifth birthday.

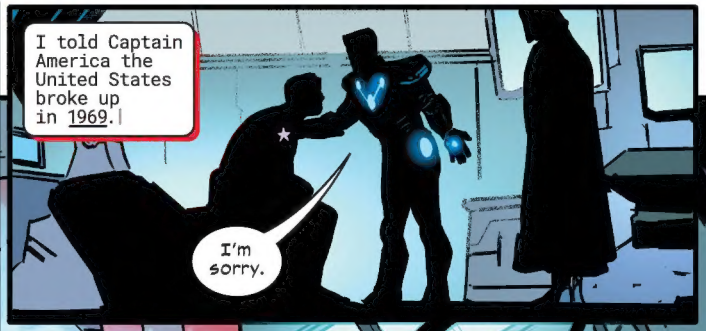
ULTIMATES 1.0
It will be a kind of... *super hero resistance network.*
Created from the post-human catalysts and files we stole from the Maker. Connected by Stark Tech and *common cause.*
Small at first, but growing *exponentially* as we add new nodes.
2 YEARS TO FIX TH
ULTIMATES
MAKER IMPRISONED / TEMPORAL DEFENSES DISABLED.
2024
REALEASE
You propose we re-create this other world *here?* This... *"Earth Six-One-Six"?*
I *propose* we put right what the Maker put wrong. To help this world become the world it is *supposed* to be.
A world of *heroes.*
This world is not *that* one. *Realities diverge.*
The Maker has purged himself of mercy. The people in these files are likely *dead.*
Then we'll find *replacements.* With the population data and computing power at our disposal, we can find *near-perfect* substitutes.
Where *history* fails, we'll let *science* choose.

But Doom had his own ideas.
Origin-machines. It... could work. With a few modifications.
Such as?
He is unsettling and brilliant. Intense.
Trapped inside his City, the Maker has thousands of years to prepare for our next meeting. We have only two.
If we're to have any hope...we'll have to make the most of them.
The Immortus Engine. Yeah, I thought about it, but...I'm not sure. There're already so many moving parts to this...time travel only adds further complications--and calculations...
Not quite the Maker, but there is a resemblance.
Leave the calculations to me.
We'll build your..."Ultimate Network"... six months in the past. And have our army overnight.
I tried to call him Reed, but he insists I call him Doom.
Four dimensions, Iron Lad. Four at least.


While Doom did the math, I designed super-identities and calculated the probability of heroism as a function of location, age, psychological history, past trauma and 244 other unique variables.

In between heroes, I cracked the Captain America problem.
CRRAAACK

Seventy-five years had passed, but for him, it was an instant. Time travel.
Two-thousand and twenty-four? Who's the president?


I told Captain America the United States broke up in 1969.
I'm sorry.

All things considered, he took it pretty well.

The world--even *this* one, even *ours*--it has such wonders. I never knew.
There are gods, Dad. Did you know that there are gods?
How *is* he, Sif?
In the room next door, a god bled out all over the floor.
Sif...?
It should be nothing for him, but...*magic blade.* The wound won't close.
I'm sorry. If you ***need*** anything--
It is ***gods*** who grant gifts to ***mortals.*** Not the other way around.
Leave us.
Who do you think gods pray to, when they pray?

For six days, I didn't sleep, I didn't eat. While I worked, my armor fed concentrated nutrients and proprietary Stark™ stimulants directly into my bloodstream.
Six days preparing catalysts and calculating trajectories through the fourth dimension. Six days checking and rechecking our math.
On the seventh day (there are gods, Dad), we were ready.
We are ready.
It won't work.
Though not everyone was so confident.
What?
You can't start a revolution from your living room. Revolutions start on the ground.
And heroes don't come out of boxes. It won't work.
This is not a revolution. More like a machine-- or an experiment. One to shake the world.
This is science.
No. It's a revolution. I know one when I see one.
There is some very high-level math and engineering at work here, Steve. Hard even for us to understand sometimes.
But it should work.

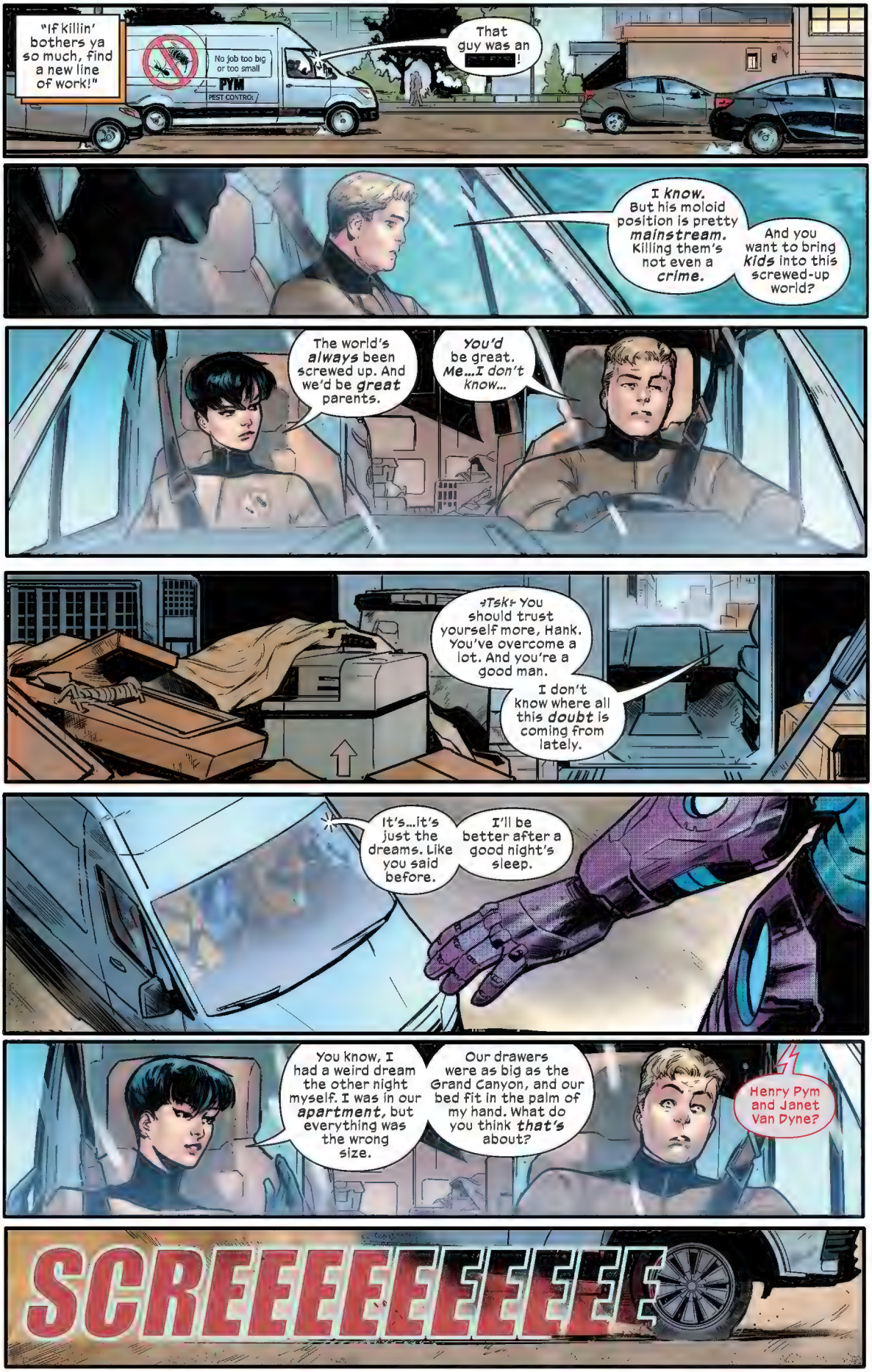
I'll admit it:
Is that *it?* I thought it'd be more dramatic.
The moment itself was a little anticlimactic.
But time travel is instantaneous. One second after we sent our "origin-boxes" into the past, they would *always have been there.*
1,200 miles above Earth's atmosphere, I opened a window... ready to look out onto a world overflowing with heroes.
It looks...
...*the same.*
Yeah... pretty much the same. Shoot.
Worse, in fact. *Measurably* worse.
That Steve Rogers... he really is a perfect human.

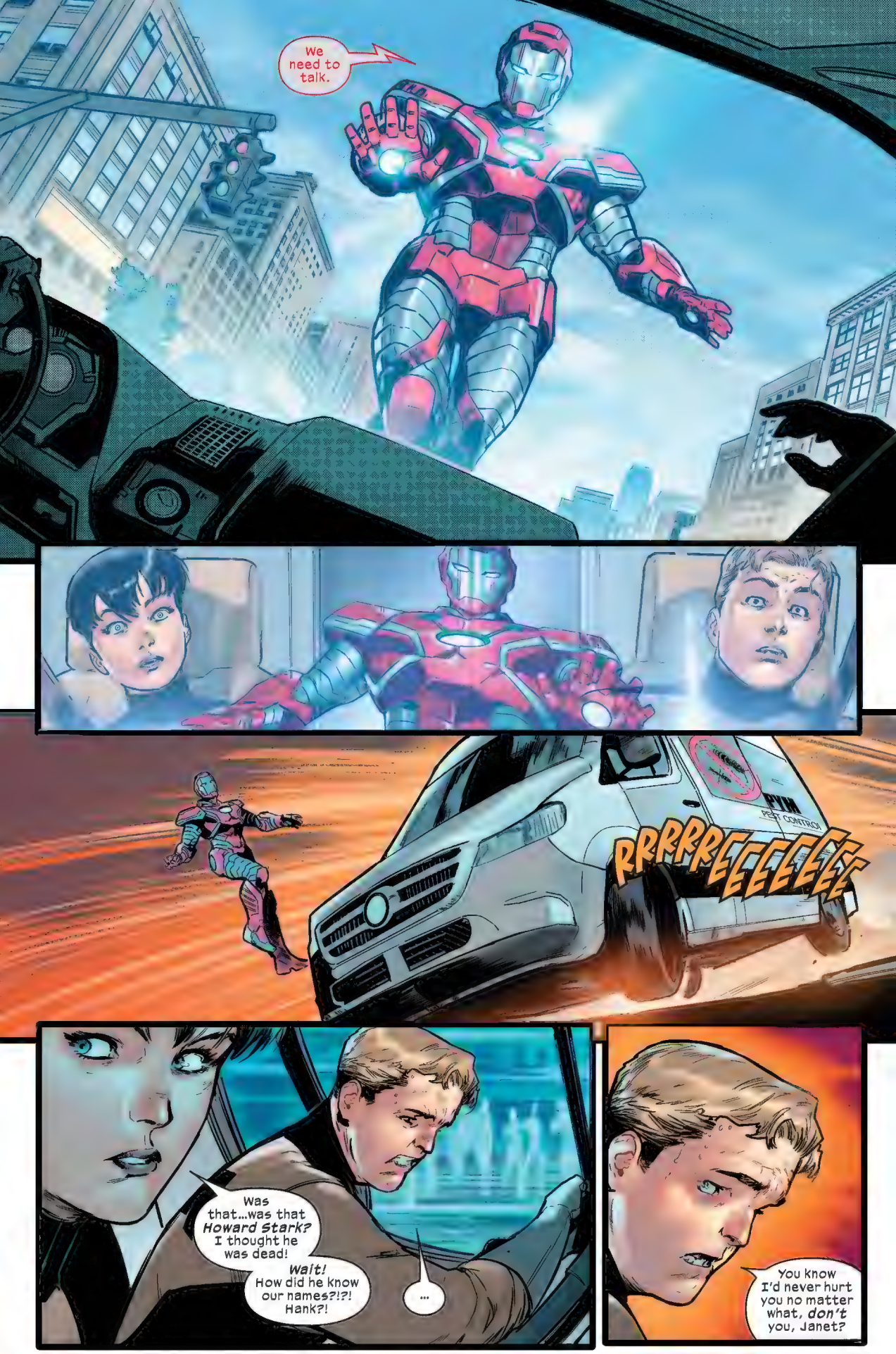
He didn't even say "I told you so."
It looks like only one or two took. The rest...all rejected, intercepted or deceased.
A-- a lot of accidental suicide by super-power.
Okay. I admit it...I have not yet conquered time.
Until you've got a better handle on it, maybe we stick to time-traveling the old-fashioned way--one second at a time.
I--
You overreact. One does not abandon an experiment after a single failure.
"Experiment"? These are people's lives--
We must troubleshoot and try again--
Enough!
Steve's right. We...we killed people, Doom. Ruined lives... I...I don't care if it puts us at a disadvantage. The Immortus Engine is off-limits.
ULTIMATES 1.0
No more time travel.

"We'll save the world some *other* way."
ULTIMATES v2.0
Somebody call about a *bug* problem?
SQUASH
HOBOKEN. NEW JERSEY.
Flambé
restaurant
Whoa, keep your *voice* down! I'm runnin' a *restaurant* here! You'll scare off my customers!
Sorry.
What are we dealing with, Mr. Flambé? What variety of *vermin,* exactly?
What am I, a taxonomist?! Food's goin' missing, and I got *mouths* to feed!
Whatever they are, I want 'em *dead.*
Don't worry, we'll take care of it. Like the van says--"no job too big or small"!

Everything okay, Hank?
Hmm?
You've been kind of distant lately. For months, actually.
Is it...are you having the dreams again?
Janet! I told you that in confidence!
It's just us down here, Hank. I'm your wife. No one's making fun of you.
Recurring nightmares about ants begging for their lives is nothing to laugh at.
...it's the little personal details about themselves they slip in--that's the most horrible part...
God, I'm such a mess, Jan. Sometimes I think you'd be better off without me...
We've talked about this, Hank. I love you. I love our life together. And everyone's a mess. The world's a mess.
C'mon. I think I heard something coming from over there...
But do you...do you ever wish things were different?
I think there's more to life than squashing bugs, if that's what you mean.
I'd like to try bringing life into the world one day.
K-kids...?
Sure. What could be better than that? Imagine...

...our own little *family.*
"Well? Did ya take *care* of it?"
No way, Flambē! You've got *moloids* living down there! From what we can see, an entire *extended family.*
Okay, I'll pay *DOUBLE.* But *you* do *disposal.*
Sir, they *tell stories.* They bury their dead. I can recommend a humane *relocation* service--
Those cost an arm and a leg and take weeks!
Fine, *triple,* and *I'll* handle the disposal. Final offer!
No deal, Flambē! We don't kill anything with a *culture.*
You have to draw the line *somewhere.*
Oh, *that's* rich! You're *exterminators,* for crissakes!
PYM
PYM


"If killin' bothers ya so much, find a new line of work!"
No job too big or too small
PYM
PEST CONTROL
That guy was an [redacted]!
I know. But his moloid position is pretty mainstream. Killing them's not even a crime.
And you want to bring kids into this screwed-up world?
The world's always been screwed up. And we'd be great parents.
You'd be great. Me...I don't know...
Tsk You should trust yourself more, Hank. You've overcome a lot. And you're a good man.
I don't know where all this doubt is coming from lately.
It's...it's just the dreams. Like you said before.
I'll be better after a good night's sleep.
You know, I had a weird dream the other night myself. I was in our apartment, but everything was the wrong size.
Our drawers were as big as the Grand Canyon, and our bed fit in the palm of my hand. What do you think that's about?
Henry Pym and Janet Van Dyne?
SCREEEEEEEEEEE!


We need to talk.
RRRRREEEEEEE
PEST CONTROL
Was that...was that Howard Stark? I thought he was dead!
Wait! How did he know our names?!?! Hank?!
...
You know I'd never hurt you no matter what, don't you, Janet?

They're going south down Broad Street.
I will stop them.
Gently.
What? Where's this coming from? You're Hank Pym! You wouldn't hurt a fly.
Oh... you know what I--
CRASH
Uhhh!
Ugh!
ZZRT
Hello... talking to Henry Pym and Janet Van Dyne...
What is that...?
Oh god...!
...please listen carefully...
I'm sorry, Janet. I was... I love you. I love you so much. I'm so sorry.
It's us who should apologize. There was a... miscommunication.

...this is for you.
I'm sorry about the van.
We're still figuring everything out.
They yet live. How much more gentle do you want?
...stealth suits to mask your identities and a sample of Pym Particles necessary for you to undergo a post-human transformation.
PYM
PYM PEST CONTROL
Ugh. I hate my voice on recordings. I sound so cold.
No wonder these things didn't work.
...should have been heroes, but a great evil robbed you both of your destinies and left Henry with irreversible brain damage...
Your accident...
I...I don't remember--
Forget that. We don't have much time. They'll be coming for us now.
Hey, you're Tony Stark! You killed thousands of people!
I hope you're not one of those people who believes everything you're told, Mrs. Van Dyne.
...exercise in creating a society that could be perfectly directed and controlled...

Look, I don't have to tell you the world is broken.
I can see it in your faces. In the sad slump of your shoulders.
...you were supposed to have a different life.
Well, we're going to fix it. And we need your help.
It's been six months, and you haven't accepted our offer. I don't blame you. You must have thought you'd be alone.
Which is why we've come in person. We wanted to tell you.
...protect the innocent, save lives and inspire...
Six months? What's he talking about, Hank?
You won't be alone. We'd be here to help you. You'd be part of something.
I don't understand. Part of what?
...become a super hero...
The solution. We're calling it--
Enfin! Je vous cherchais!

ENVOYEZ LA CROISADE NOIRE!
MORT AUX TERRORISTES!
Captain Britain--one of the Maker's inner circle! And he's brought his personal guard--the Black Crusade.
Captain Britain? The one screaming in French?
The preening Frank with the magic blade is mine.
No, you have to stay close to Thor. He's our way out of here.
Besides, it's me Britain wants. I'm the reason he doesn't have peripheral vision.

Ultimates... uhhh... ATTACK!
Janet, I'm sorry. I--I didn't want to lose--
You don't have to explain, Hank. I understand.
I...know you're scared. I'm scared too, but...
They stole your future...
PYM PEST CONTROL
You saw what we did to your papa's tower, petit Stark? Grand improvement, non?
"...how many nights did we stay up terrified watching the news, feeling helpless?
"How many mornings did we have to drag ourselves out of bed?"
I'm tired of being afraid. Aren't you?
There's more to life than squashing bugs, Hank. There has to be.
I love you no matter what choice you make. But this...this is mine.
The question is...

...do you want it back?
Okay... Let's see how this--whoaaa! The suit can ffff--
PYM
PEST CON
--fffffughhh!
PFF
That... that...
...that was amazing!
"I don't deserve her."

She doesn't seem to agree.
She doesn't know. She hasn't read them.
PYM
CRACK
Ahhh, there is your face, petit Stark! I remember it! The whole world remembers it!
Hahaha!
"I read them. The files about who we were supposed to be. I read everything.
"She's supposed to be a super hero. She's supposed to make the world a better place."
Hey... how do I know you're not the bad guys...?
I suppose you don't. But we're not the ones trying to kill you.
Me? Even in that reality, I'm a mess. A failure. Hero, villain...good, bad or mad...I can't seem to make up my mind.
I'm a loser at best. A menace at worst. I'm dangerous.

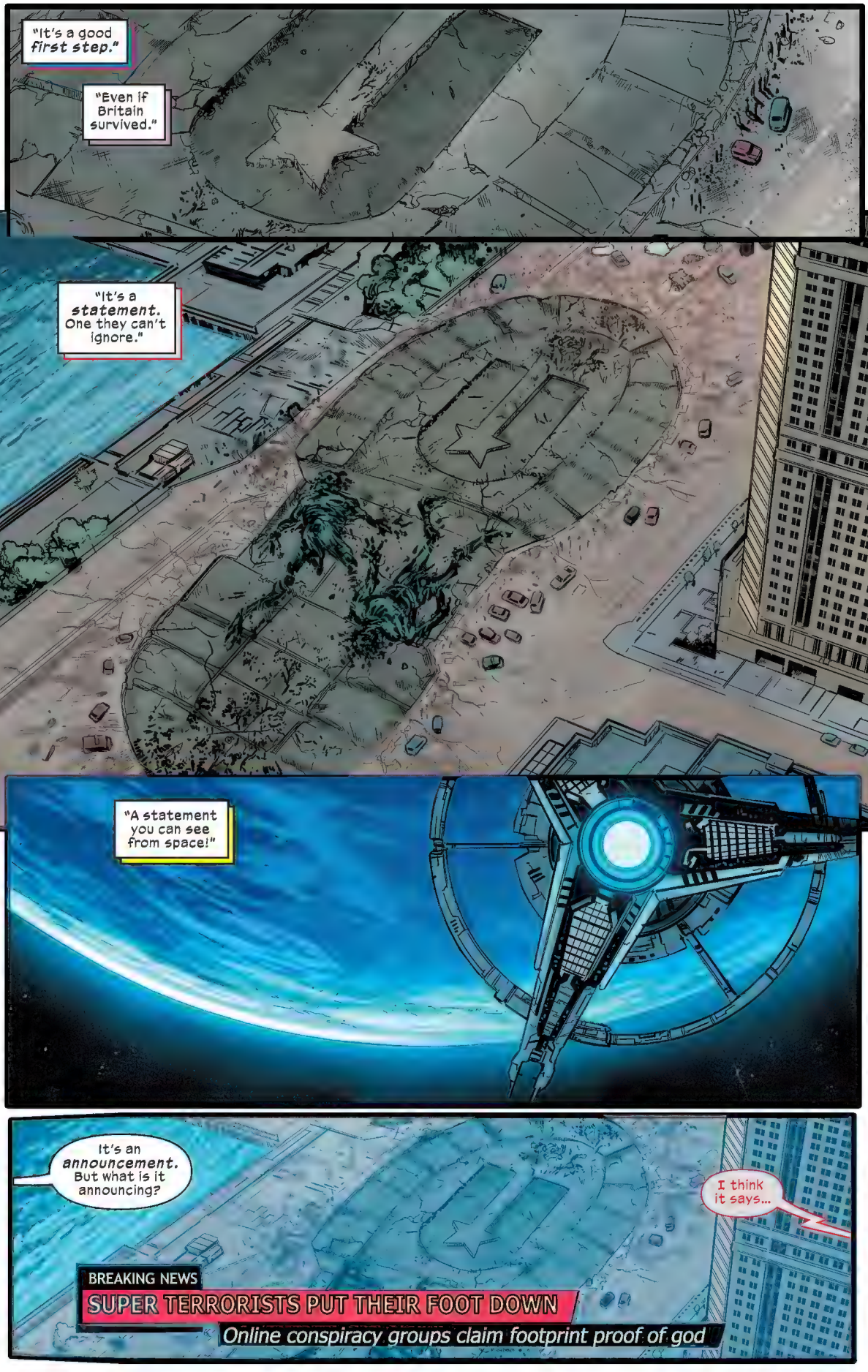
Ngghh! So you went with...milky white...for the eye, huh?
You know, they make lifelike prosthetics now. Irises and everything. I could probably get you a deal.
CRUSH
You don't like? Maybe I take yours--Pop! Pop!--for replacement.
Oeil pour oeil.
Eye for an eye had its day. Time for something new.
ZSHHOOOM!!
The things it says I did... It says I hurt people. It says I hurt her. My Janet. I'd never hurt her... but I do.
It already happened.
Huggrlll!
"Sure, I'm afraid of dying. Or...or getting hurt."
But I'm most afraid that if I become what you want me to be...what I'm supposed to be...
...I'll hurt the people I love most.
I don't have an answer for you, Henry. Certainly no guarantees. I can only say that that man is not you.
His failures are not your failures. His sins are not yours.
PYM

"In my experience, Henry, there are times that call us to be bigger than ourselves. For the greater good.
KRAKA-
And I have been killing giants since the sky was young.
Don't, Thor. Let me. You're wounded...
I am no invalid. I am the God of Thunder.
DOOOOM
Oof. Stubborn goat.
Oooooo...
"The world needs giants right now, son."
No one can make this choice for you, Henry. But if I can make an observation?
You could have gotten rid of that thing anytime. Buried it, thrown it in the river, given it away, smashed it to pieces.
But you've been driving around with it in arm's reach for six months.
I'm no genius, but seems to me that means something.

Stupid.
Peasant.
CRACK
Who are you-- to oppose us?
I trace my lineage to Louis XIV--the Sun King himself. I was born to rule this world.
My empire--even Uncle Louis could not have dreamed! All of Europe is my playground! Your East Coast, my new toy!
Avalon is also mine. Of her most holy symbols, I make mockeries.
Arthur's roundtable I broke into firewood to burn dissidents. The Lady of the Lake I took as a concubine. The Holy Grail I made my chamber pot.
I have crushed the soul of a people beneath my boot! What are you next to that?!
UKK!
CRRUSH

We're...the... Ultimates...
And...something Louis learned...that you...should know...
FWOOOSH
There are more of us than there are of you.
We have boots too.

And our boots are bigger.
SQUAAASSH
And you said there's more to life than squashing bugs.


"It's a good first step."
"Even if Britain survived."
"It's a statement. One they can't ignore."
"A statement you can see from space!"
It's an announcement. But what is it announcing?
I think it says...
BREAKING NEWS
SUPER TERRORISTS PUT THEIR FOOT DOWN
Online conspiracy groups claim footprint proof of god

...the Ultimates are here. And we're going to leave a mark.
SEVENTEEN MONTHS REMAINING...

"What is failure?"

You always loved questions, but I think that was your favorite. Before anyone could answer, you'd say:

"Failure is what comes before success."

I bet it killed in boardrooms and cocktail parties, but I heard it for what it was: a deflection. By then, you were usually well into your tenth drink and slurring your words.

Howard Stark, the Iron Man. At some point, every boy sees his father for what he is: a man with flaws and weaknesses, like any other. But I was advanced for my age. I saw it earlier than most.

I remember the day exactly. It was my fifth birthday. You were in South America, off at some society gala. I cried and cried, but none of the maids or nurses or nannies could understand why. I cried for *three days*, until you finally came home. You thought I might be ill...until I showed you my work. You checked it and could find no fault.

I was five years old when I mathematically proved that life isn't fair.

All I wanted was to talk to you about my findings, but instead, you built me a rudimentary psychotherapy A.I. A glorified chatbot named J.A.R.V.I.S. Because that's the kind of father you were. What other word is there for it but *failure*?

As a father. As a husband. As a leader. As a man. Failure.

So it's no surprise that this world you helped make--*or at least maintain*--is also a failure. A world run by fickle monsters. Is that why you drank? You couldn't stand the unobstructed view of what you helped make?

For all your brilliance you never understood--*you couldn't imagine*--how far you'd have to go to really change things. Or perhaps you did understand and simply chose not to. For the sake of your memory, I prefer to believe the former.

Don't think your final act of sacrifice absolves you. It doesn't. You took the easy way out, *as always*.

Like I said: It's quite a mess you left, Dad. And now we have to clean it up. What choice do we have?

Initially, I thought we could re-create the world that was stolen from us. Remake *this* world in *that* world's image. But I see now that the Maker did his work too well. He's changed too much—bent the moral arc of this universe in the wrong direction.

If there's any hope of fixing things...it won't be enough to be as good as the heroes of that simpler world. We'll have to be better. I don't know what that looks like yet. But we're going to figure it out.

So thank you for your letter, Dad. And for your sacrifice. But it was too little, too late. You should have always been fighting. We all should have been fighting from the start.

I'll always love you, Dad. But I'll never forgive you.

You were the smartest man in the world. You should have known better.

And that is failure.

Your son,
Tony

THE WORLD

THE WORLD

AS REMADE BY THE MAKER'S COUNCIL

- ~~THE NORTH AMERICAN UNION~~ REDISTRIBUTED
- ~~REGIONAL SUBSIDIARIES~~ REDISTRIBUTED

- THE SOCIETY OF SOUTH AMERICA
- REGIONAL CLUBS
- FRACTIONAL CULTURES

- THE EUROPEAN COALITION
- REGIONAL GOVERNORS
- FIEFDOMS

- THE CITY
- LATVERIAN TERRITORIES

- THE UPPER AND LOWER KINGDOMS
- REGIONAL DYNASTIES
- LOCAL TEMPLES

- THE EURASIAN REPUBLIC
- REGIONAL DIRECTORS
- LOCAL SCHOOLS

- THE CHILDREN OF ETERNAL LIGHT
- THE SHADOWS OF THE IMMORTAL HAND

- HI NO KUNI ("LAND OF THE SUN")
- DAIMYOS

- UNDISCOVERED TERRITORY

1963-2024